COMIXSCENE

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DRUGS & THE COMICS!

A SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLICATION

COMIXSCENE
MAY-JUNE 1973 No. 4
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and the brotherhood of comic artists and writers.

EDITORIAL

The world is flat!

The comic book world, that is. Remember when you couldn't wait to get to the local newsstand to see what'd been happening to your favorite comic character? Bet you don't run half as fast these days! Reading more now, but enjoying it less you say. We know how you feel!

Today's comics have been infected with a case of acute formula-itis, a condition bred by success. Things are looking up though. New titles are opening doors for new talent. National's Philippine contingent has added considerable zest to the overall picture. Marvel's recent thrust into the magazine and pulp field is another hopeful sign pointing the way toward new directions.

Indications are that a revolution may be just around the corner. The undergrounds are an important part of it. So are the overgrounds, and the European comics. A score of influences are shaping an eclectic revolution that has been long overdue. Every form of media will contribute to its development; all will be necessary. So will you. Remember that. Be there.

In any case, *COMIXSCENE* will keep you informed on all the developments in the field as they occur—and before they happen. Hopefully, we will be involved in the new directions comic art will be taking in the near future.

Talking about directions, last issue's centerspread story, *Frogs*, elicited the widest spectrum of opinions in mail response since we made our publishing debut back in 1970. A tale of psychological nightmare, it related a visual narrative about a man and his sadistic obsession with frogs throughout his lifetime, and his eventual death, complicated by paranoiac guilt.

One of the aspects which fascinates me most about telling stories graphically, is the element of time—the least understood and most ignored (third) dimension in the two-dimensional world of comic art. Too few artists and writers have endeavored to comprehend the nature of orchestration of panels and imagery in regard to time.

Except for the most basic, empirical applications, development and experimentation along these lines has been almost non-existant, as a glance through any stack of comics will amply prove. Nevertheless, I do not mean to suggest that commercial overground comics are the place for such experimentation.

Stan Lee (as editor) and I always locked horns on this matter. As *The Editor*, his word was, of course, the final one—and an honest one, because undisciplined experimentation could easily result in loss of sales, an end effect neither of us wanted.

As a consequence, personal graphic invention was done cautiously, often circuitously, in an effort to please both of us. For awhile, I was producing one book for Stan, the next for myself. If I am to believe my peers, amid the failures, some visual innovation did, in time, emerge.

Overground experimentation must, out of necessity, be practiced in moderation. That's why *Frogs* appeared in *COMIXSCENE*. (Ray of Hope dept: Marvel Comics editor, Roy Thomas, has asked about *Frogs* reprint rights for one of his books, as has underground publisher Denis Kitchen).

It is my feeling, however, that the success or failure of *Frogs* is unimportant. What is important, is the fact that it was published as an experiment, opening the doors for more of the same, perhaps expanding the perimeter of imaginative storytelling in the minds of fans and pros alike.

More *Frogs* trivia: Did you know *Frogs* can be "read" horizontally as well as vertically? Try it! Then read it diagonally, starting in the upper left corner. Once the basic concept of *Frogs* is understood, it can be read any way—including from the center outward, like a spiral—thereby enabling the reader to create a new "telling" of the story every time. It's an experience, a trip; try it and see what we mean. Some of the "improvised" continuity and transitions will knock you out!

On another level, consider *Frogs* as a unit. You'll have to agree that as a structural statement it has an enormous amount of kinetic energy. Consider it also as an iconographic study. The ways in which it may entertain or amuse are limited only by the imagination.

Actually, *Frogs* was not the first story done in that format. Another tale, produced several months earlier exists and, if reader response to innovative storytelling is great enough, will also be published in *COMIXSCENE*. Write and let us know!

We selected this issue's theme, *Drugs and The Comics*, to underscore the point that comics are growing up. Byron Preiss' feature explores that aspect of comics and reveals the full story behind *The Block*.

Comics have an enormous influence in America today, a fact that educators are just beginning to realize. That influence, however, is the responsibility of the brotherhood of comic artists, writers, editors and publishers. It is distressing, perhaps even embarrassing, that no move was ever made to engage in a program to combat the drug problem from this direction.

Though we may be accused of acting pretentiously, Byron and I took it upon ourselves to initiate an action against juvenile drug abuse. How adults handle their lives is of little concern to me. They know better. Kids don't. So we produced the first of a series, *The Block* aimed primarily at children between the ages of eight to fourteen.

It was not meant for comic fandom! But there is a purpose for publishing it here. It is our hope that *The Block* and its message will be extended to an even wider audience. You can help by bringing it to the attention of the people who could best use it to inform, instruct, and educate today's generation. How about it?

In the middle of March 1973, the *Club des Amis de la Bande Dessinee* held their annual exposition during a week-long international congress on graphics and books, attended by over 100,000 people in Brussels, Belgium. During the exposition, the members of the organization judged the contemporary comic scene on a world-wide basis and made their awards accordingly.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I accept from the C. A. B. D., the *Prix Saint-Michel*, the international grand prize as comic artist of the year. Needless to say, I was surprised and quite gratified by the award. Paul-Michel Dolean and Claude Soulard presented the impressive bronze Medal of Honor to me in New York City several weeks later. My sincere thanks to you and your entire organization, gentlemen.

The next issue of *COMIXSCENE* will be the best yet! Already in production, issue 5 will feature *Sword and Sorcery* as its major theme. It will contain more color, more features and more graphics than ever before. How? Simple! *COMIXSCENE* 5 will be a GIANT DOUBLE ISSUE packed with page after page of barbaric splendor—stories, pin-ups, articles, features and facts about swordplay, swashbuckling and savagery in comics, films and pulps.

Presented in the usual Supergraphics manner, the issue will present a plentitude of the most sensational artwork, done by a host of top professionals, exclusively for *COMIXSCENE*. All this plus a color fold-out poster of my own sword and sorcery character, Talon.

With issue 5, we will be initiating a subscription drive for this publication. As a product, *COMIXSCENE* is quite expensive to produce and remains a labor of love. We have endeavored to feature the very best writing, art and reproduction possible. Our typesetting, paper and printing are also of the highest quality.

If *COMIXSCENE* is to continue, we will need your full support. Subscribe now—for yourself or for a friend. *COMIXSCENE* was created for fandom and only with fandom's total co-operation can it survive. The great double issue, plus the bonus poster, will *only* be available by subscription *before* publication.

Back issue prices will be in effect as usual after our subscriptions have been mailed out. Back issue price on the double issue will be $2.00 plus $1.00 additional for the poster. SUBSCRIBE NOW and make a big saving on both.

Remember: ONLY current and new subscribers will be able to obtain the double issue and poster at the bargain price. We'll say it again —SUBSCRIBE NOW!!!

NOTE: Because our stock on *COMIXSCENE* 1 has been considerably depleted, it will begin selling immediately as a back issue for [illegible]

More high-powered surprises are in store for *COMIXSCENE* subscribers in the months to come. Our editorial policy of featuring a special character or theme each issue has been extremely well received by our readership. All this to say that our format will remain the same. Special issues, however, are in the planning stages now. One of them (already written and ready to go) explores *The Evolution of a Comic Book*, from creation to distribution—the complete story of how a comic is produced. This super issue will be a MUST for all comic fans.

That's the wrap-up for another issue. Let us know your thoughts on our publications, so that we may continue to give you the kind of news, features and graphics that you want to see.

Until next time then, take care!

Steranko

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
BRUCE ELLIOTT

MARVEL EXPANDS B&W LINE-UP

Marvel's in the humor business again as *Crazy* jumps to a black and white format featuring a number of new ideas and contributors. Kelly Freas will do the front cover of the first large-sized issue and Vaughn Bode will do the back. Staff writers and artists include Jean Shepherd (*Playboy*), Marie Severin, Harlan Ellison, Marv Wolfman and Roy Thomas. There will be continuous use of the photo-story "funnett" style (a la *National Lampoon*). One of the first illustrated features will be "Kung Fools" by Stu Schwartzberg and Mike Ploog. A color comic version of "Kung Fools" was done by Marv Wolfman and Marie Severin, but it will not be used, except possibly as a feature in *Foom Magazine*.

Crazy is, in many ways, Marv Wolfman's project. Four or five logos were designed before the final one was accepted. The cover design and character was carefully worked and reworked at in an effort to provide the greatest combination of humor and eye-catching design possible. Even the little man that appears on the cover was changed from a stylish, gay nineties type with a top-hat and cane, to the festive-looking amateur in the slouch hat and enveloping cloak. The back cover of *Crazy* is one of Vaughn Bode's Cheech Wizard adventures, pitting the walking, talking hat against the sanity of mankind.

Part of the breakdown of *Crazy* includes a twenty page "future" section, consisting of news, sports, cartoons and humorous predictions of things to come. Harlan Ellison will be featured prominently in this section, lending his talents to the efforts of the rest of the bullpen.

Crazy is not the new Will Eisner edited, *National Lampoon*-type book that we reported in the last issue of *Comixscene*. That arrangement has yet to be finalized. Still another deal under discussion is one in which Eisner will package magazines (like *Tales of the Zombie*, *Vampire Tales*, *Ghost Rider*) in the tradition of the old 40's shop system.

Savage Tales is back! In a move which expresses total confidence in their new line of black and white magazines, Marvel has started production on a new version of *Savage Tales*. Numbering will begin with issue two and will be primarily based on the Conan/Robert E. Howard brand of barbarian sword and sorcery that has worked so well in comics over the past few years. The second issue, due out June 30, will have a John Buscema cover painting --the same painting which was done for the original *Savage Tales 2*, prior to its being cancelled several years ago after only one issue. The painting was originally intended to accompany a particular Conan story, "Dweller in the Dark," which eventually saw print in *Conan 12*. The lead story for the second issue, however, will be a Howard-Thomas-Smith Conan tale called "Red Nails."

Conan will be the lead feature for *Savage Tales* and will be written in a free time-span manner, jumping from various periods in the Cimmerian's life, with little regard for specific chronological order. Each Conan story will be 30-35 pages in length and Roy Thomas would like to keep Buscema and Smith on as the regular artists for the character. All the artwork on the black and white books will be returned if the artists request it, as an added incentive to turn the black and whites into more than just a hodgepodge of comic book work.

Editor Thomas will have complete control over *Savage Tales* and intends to make it into an "art showcase, super comic and super fanzine all rolled into one." There will be articles, maps, pin-ups by artists generally not associated with the Conan character, and biographies of everyone concerned in the production of the Howard material. Poul Anderson, Leigh Brackett, Glenn Lord and Lin Carter have been approached to do text features for the

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book, to supplement an assortment of fanzine and *Amra* reprints that will run each issue. One such article to be used is "An Informal Biography of Conan" from a 1938 fanzine. Fan material or not, all contributors will be paid.

Tentatively scheduled for issue 4 is a lengthy Conan story by Thomas and Neal Adams called "Curse of the Golden Skull." Other features in *Savage Tales* will consist of Gil Kane's Blackmark, serialized from the beginning of the first paperback story and continuing through the series at 10-15 pages per issue. If it proves a popular feature, Gil may complete the proposed stories and make Blackmark a regular feature. There are also plans for an occasional King Kull story by John and Marie Severin, a Red Sonja series by Esteban Maroto, Solomon Kane by Alan Weiss, and possibly a series based upon a character called Juma, taken from a Carter/de Camp story entitled "City of Skulls." The cover for the third issue is intended to be a Barry Smith painting, while the following one will most likely be an Adams illustration.

COMIC WANT LIST!

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STERANKO

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MARVEL NEWS

Since their debut several months ago, Marvel continues to shape and polish their black and white magazines. Man-Thing will appear in *Monsters Unleashed*, under the guidance of Frank Brunner. The Lord of Mess has done well in the color comics and Marvel would like to further expose him to the public. The second issue of this book will feature "Frankenstein" by John Buscema and Syd Shores with Gary Friedrich writing; "Lifeboat" by Gerry Conway and Jesus Blasco; "Roaches" by Conway and Ralph Reese. All this and a Boris Vallejo cover painting.

Vampire Tales 2 will contain "The Praying Mantis Principle" by Don McGregor, Rich Buckler, Carlos Garzon and Klaus Jensen. The main characters in the story are Rodish Twist and Conrad Jevins, a pair of Sherlock Holmes parodies who star

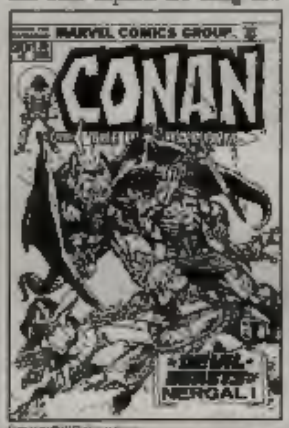
in the wild and unusual story. *Tales of the Zombie* will feature a duo of unrelated stories entitled "Voodoo Unto Others" and "Before They Voodoo Unto You," while Pablo Marcos takes over the Zombie series. Don McGregor will begin writing the Morbius strip in this issue with Buckler will do layouts.

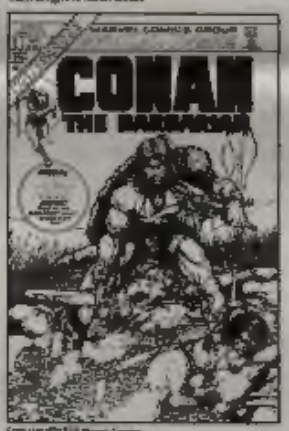
Dracula Lives! 3 will carry a Neal Adams cover with Morrow paintings slated for the future. A Wolfman, Buscema and Shores story is also scheduled called "Lord of the Dead," a sequel to last issue's Dracula origin. Also used is a Thomas-Weiss Solomon Kane yarn.

One of the most popular of the new Marvel magazines is *Monster Madness*—the second issue received over 1,000 letters. Due to the tight schedule at Marvel, however, it will remain on a quarterly publishing schedule. The articles in *Monster Madness* appear to be extremely popular and will be used at every opportunity.

The Haunt of Horror 3 will be utilizing the artistic talents of Kelly Freas and Walt Simonson, as well as the writing of Al Bennet on "Night People," John K. Diomede on "Twisted Cross," John Jakes' "Running of Lady Hound," R.A. Lafferty's "Gold Fist," and Gerry Conway's "Underground."

The British Marvel editions have taken off like a rocket, as reported in the last issue of *COMIXSCENE*, and the Marvel characters are being systematically introduced to Great Britain. Not all of the list of Marvel characters have been formally "originated" as of yet, calling for some rewriting and panel elimination. For instance, a recent Hulk story for the British books carried a guest appearance by the Avengers. However, the Avengers have not been presented to the readers there yet, so their mention had to be adjusted for the story. Rich Buckler and Mike Esposito are doing new





covers for all of the books.

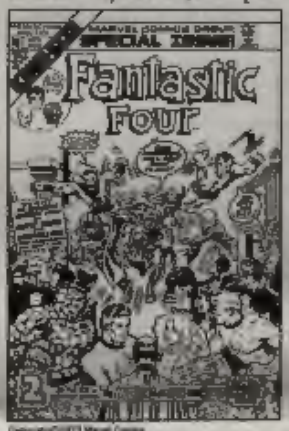
Meanwhile, back in the regular line of color comics, *Conan* 30 will carry a Thomas-Carter-Howard adaptation called "Hand of Nergal." Ernie Chua inked the Buscema pencils using a number of unusual blue and red special effects. Roy Thomas is preparing a mystical story wherein Conan battles a mummy, armed with a magic sword for a future issue.

The *Conan* comic book will be entering the pirate stage of the barbarian's adventures soon, with this storyline continuing from six months to a year, depending on how popular it is with the readers. Conan will make his way to Africa and the region which is now Egypt, where the adaptation of the "Queen of the Black Coast" will take place. It seems that *Conan* 8 was actually the turning point for the book, as the sales rose to a point where it became a money-maker.

There is a special 10-page sword and sorcery story for Gil Kane to illustrate whenever he finds the time to squeeze it into his busy schedule. It will probably wind up in the Savage Tales magazine, but as of now it is only a script. The interesting point about it is that it was originally intended to be drawn by Al Williamson, but time was a factor and Al had to turn down the assignment.

Marvel is going to be releasing four giant "specials" this summer, priced at thirty-five cents each. These books will consist of all reprint material, featuring classic tales from the past. The first three books have been planned, spotlighting the Fantastic Four, Spiderman and Conan.

Morbius, the weird Spider-man villain who is currently being featured in *Vampire Tales*, has reportedly been slated to star in a new color comic, drawn by Paul Gulacy, another Dan Adkins discovery.



Mike Royer will be dropping the *Mister Miracle* book after his next inking job. In its place, he will begin penciling and inking *Ka-Zar*, probably over Marie Severin's breakdowns.

Doc Savage is now being plotted by Gardner Fox, with the scripting and art being handled by a number of people. Issue 7, an adaptation of "The Hand of the Werewolf," takes place in the Canadian Northwoods, and the adventure is triggered by the mysterious death of Doc's uncle, Alex Savage. The cast includes Doc, Renny, Ham and Monk. Ross Andru and Frank Giacoia will illustrate *Doc Savage* 8 will have layouts by Rich Buckler and will initiate a new "villain policy" for the comic. In the future, most of the villains will be taken from various old pulps, thereby eliminating most of the straight adaptations—for the moment.

Dracula 12 will find our favorite blood-sucker trapped in a haunted house with the Blade, Drake and other friends. In the end, everyone manages to escape alive . . . except cool Lana 13, the June release, finds the remaining part of the group taking off after Dracula, blaming him for their friend's death. Tom Palmer will once again begin to ink Gene Colan's pencils with this issue, guided by the writing of Marv Wolfman.

There will be more of a science

fiction slant to *Thor* beginning with a two-parter, "The God Jewel." Gerry Conway has Thor and his companions discovering a giant stone called the God Jewel, but the catch is that Sif and Karnilla are trapped within the stone and are being drained of energy and life. John Buscema continues as penciller and Jim Mooney catches on as the new inker. Issue 216 winds up the God Jewel adventure, as Thor encounters Xarr, and a new Colonizers tale is hinted at. The next issue, due out in July, delivers a most unusual story concerning Igroo, a former associate of Loki, and his plot to take over absolute control of Asgard while Thor and his more powerful friends are away. The story is based on the premise that, "if God did not exist, man would create him."

Jim Starlin is taking over complete control of *Captain Marvel* writing,

pencils and coloring. He begins by co-writing issue 18 with Mike Friedrich, in which Captain Marvel, the Destroyer and the guest-starring Avengers are all clobbered by the bad guys—the Controller and Thanos.

An old friend visits the *Fantastic Four* in issue 136, when Wyatt Wingfoot returns to ask the famous super-team to attend his graduation from college, and journey out to Oklahoma to meet his family and tribe. The Miracle Man also returns, however, and spoils the trip by showing off his newly-increased powers, ruining the visit. The next issue contains part two of the battle with Miracle Man, and provides some most interesting revelations about

Franklin Richards' super powers. The Hulk is being warmed up for a guest appearance in the FF very soon.

King Kull 10, under the hand of Gerry Conway, Marie Severin and Frank Chiaramonte finds Kull under mental attack from the Albino Queen, a Zarthannian Amazon type, who wants Kull dead because she thinks he killed her lover, Zarkus, in issue 6. She drugs Kull and makes him see monsters, demons and other hallucinations. Mike Ploog will take over the art chores on *King Kull* shortly, allowing the Severins to work on Kull in *Savage Tales*.

Marvel Team-Up 13 will feature a Wein-Kane story wherein Spider-man and Captain America fight the Grey Gargoyle and A.I.M. The next issue finds Spidey riding waves with the Sub-Mariner in New York City, trying to prevent Tiger Shark and Dr. Doom from creating mutant fishmen.

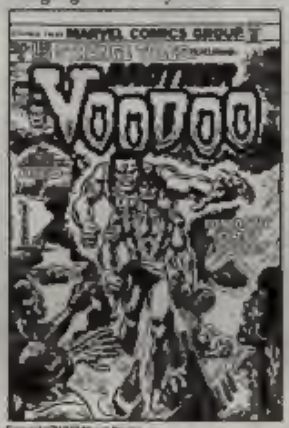
The other "team-up" comic in Marvel's stables gets rolling with the Thing and the Hulk providing a heavyweight battle against the Leader and Kurrgo in *Marvel Feature* 11. Wein scripts, Starlin pencils and Joe Sinnott provides the well-trained inks.

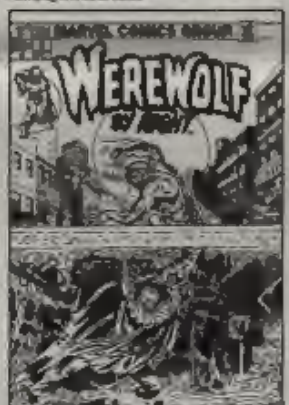
Spider-man continues to face problems both on the rooftops of New York and in his own personal life as Peter Parker. Issue 124, a Conway-Kane-Romita production, is the basis for the debut of Man-Wolf, in reality J.J. Jameson's astronaut son who is affected by a piece of lunar rock he hangs around his neck. It also marks the beginning of a new relationship between Peter and Mary Jane. Ross Andru takes over on the art with the June release, 125, and Man-Wolf continues to raise havoc. The high-

light of the issue, however, is when Harry finds Peter and Mary Jane together, and the fireworks fly. Things start hopping with 126 though, as the Kangaroo returns—changed to a super-villain by Jonas Harrow's mind control device. Harry disappears, and we get a glimpse of what eventually is going to be known as the Spidermobile, a comedy element that never seems to work! Things are never dull around that comic, are they?

Strange Tales returns once again, beginning with number 169 and showcasing a new hero called Brother Voodoo. Brother Voodoo is actually Jericho Drumm, and his origin and battle with Dumballah the Snake God are told in this issue by Wein, Colan and Adkins. Maintaining a monthly schedule, issue 170 of *Strange Tales* features the second part of the origin-Dumballah story, spotlighting on an international voodoo trombino.

Marv Wolfman, Herb Trimpe and Frank Giacoia will be taking over the bedding *War of the Worlds* comic with issue 8, while Don McGregor begins writing with number 4. The team of Steve Gerber and Don Heck take over on *Sub-Mariner* with the May release, issue 64. In this book, the Sub-Mariner battles Virago, the She-Beast (part-woman, part-shark) in order to save Zephyr-land and Atlantis. The fight continues over into the next issue where Virago gains an ally in Orka the





Killer Whale, (yep, you read it first here, folks—Orka the Killer Whale) and they both go after Namor. In between clashes, Namor initiates a search for a protective force field for Atlantis.

Werewolf By Night 9 features a different sort of "phantasm of the sewer" idea through the efforts of Sarnak and his mind control device which terrorizes Los Angeles. Conway and Tom Sutton continue the storyline onto the tenth issue, wherein Jack and his sister are captured by the Committee. Phil Russell manages to continue the string of disappearing characters in the Marvel books by "mysteriously disappearing" in this issue. Wolfman will begin scripting the Werewolf with 12.

Spider-man guests in *Daredevil* 103 when the pair of crime-fighters try to stop Rawrod from gaining access to a special set of papers, which a mystery villain would like to obtain (Hint: it isn't Jack Anderson). The next issue continues the story with Kraven the Hunter coming into the plot. Murdock's law partner, Karvin J. Broderick, also plays a big part in the eventual finale.

Under the direction of Mike Friedrich and Bob Brown, Warlock begins to take on a new look with the eighth issue. The scene is Washington, D.C. and Warlock is participating in demonstrations for his cause, but things are spoiled by Man-Beast and Memnon (formerly the Recorder from *Thor*, remember?). Friedrich is attempting to bring more of a mystery aura to the book, to capitalize on Warlock's name. There will be pro and anti-Warlockers in the future.

Astonishing Tales 20 finds Ka-Zar vs. Victorious, the A.I.M. super soldier, and the end of the Captain America serum plot—perhaps forever!

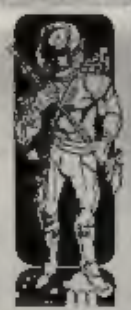
Iron Man journeys to Cincinnati to do battle with The Whiplash and gets involved in the unhappy marriage of Pepper and Happy Hogan. In the June release, 63, Iron Man

matches wits with Dr. Ghatu, an African nationalist and racist in his own right. Tony Stark, on the other hand, has to handle Rosie Gilbert and the marital problems of Happy and Pepper—after Happy finds Tony and Pepper in a shocking situation. It may be a comic book first! Mike Friedrich scripts, while Craig Russell illustrates 62 and George Tuska resumes art chores with the following issue.

Steve Englehart, Marie Severin and Herb Trimpe are working on a two-part adaptation of Gaston Leroux's "Phantom of the Opera" for *Supernatural Thrillers*, while Gary Friedrich is working on the next adaptation for the book entitled "The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow."

Man-Thing turns ecologist in *Foom* 15 when he helps a tribe of Indians living in the swamp battle a contractor who wants to build an airport in it. Gerber and Val Mayerik are now handling the character (very carefully), managing to come up with a unique plotline for 17, in which a rocket is launched from an alien planet, landing in the swamp on Earth and . . . but why spoil the surprise. Stay tuned!

Once in a decade an artist like MIKE HINGE comes along who shatters the traditional approach to imaginative illustration and produces a new kind of visual wonder. Following in the footsteps of the great science fiction artists like Frank Paul, Chesley Bonestell, Virgil Finlay, Ed Emshwiller, Kelly Freas, Jack Gaughan, and Richard Powers, MIKE HINGE has added his unique style and concepts to their ranks. Striking out in bold, new directions HINGE has executed a fantastic series of drawings as beautiful as they are exciting. Assembled here for the first time in a complete book, they represent the full range of the artist's sweeping graphic approach, superb sense of design, and unusual rendering styles. Over 70 astonishing illustrations are reproduced in this giant Supergraphics-size volume (10½" x 14"), and bound beneath a unique silver and black cover representative of the men and machines inside. THE MIKE HINGE EXPERIENCE explodes with incredible, new ideas and mind-blowing graphics guaranteed to turn you on. Never before has such a sumptuous portfolio of drawings been offered. Within these pages HINGE visualizes a dynamic tomorrow of machinery and magic, spacemen, women, robots and androids—all the wonders of inner and outer space—with a touch of electronic wizardry. Expect the unexpected when you get THE MIKE HINGE EXPERIENCE.



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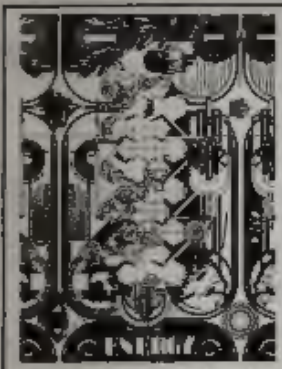

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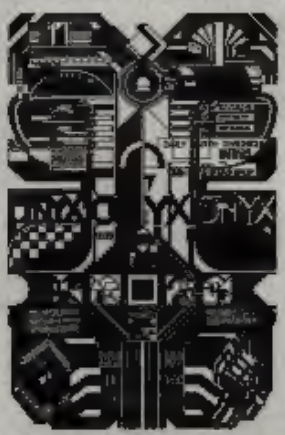

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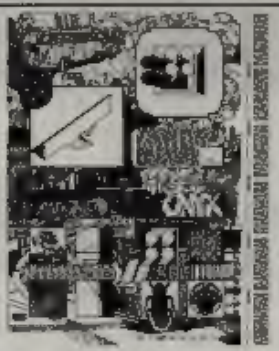

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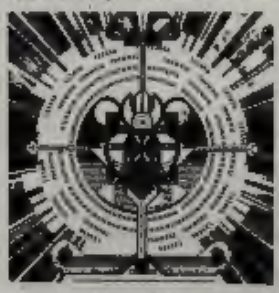

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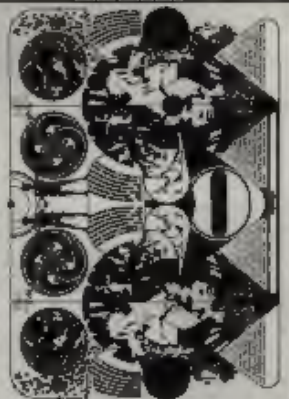

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In addition to the Hinge prints, we are also distributing the fabulous ONYX posters. ONYX is an organization of artists and architects headed by Ron Williams and Woodson Rainey. Using these imaginative blockbusters, they've created a new kind of visual communication. If there is anything more unique than these posters, we've yet to see them.

ONYX POSTER ORDER FORM APPEARS ON PAGE TWO

NATIONAL NEWS

THE AMAZING WORLD OF SUPERMAN has started construction and will celebrate the event this Memorial Day by laying the cornerstone for the Superman Exhibition Center. Located in Metropolis, Illinois, the combined museum and amusement park will be a showcase for comic books, as well as holding the world's largest collection of Superman memorabilia. The museum will contain a 25-foot mural of Superman, the largest in the world, as well as countless other exhibits and events.

There will be a permanent exhibit showing visitors how a comic book is created and produced, along with a large display of original comic book art. Other exhibits at the museum include a movie on Superman's life

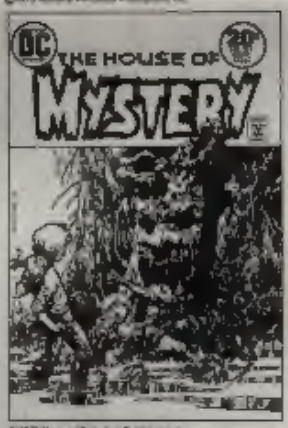
and a replica of his home (complete with trap doors, secret gadgets, robots, etc.). Additions will be made periodically as the project develops.

A Junior Superman Olympics will be held in conjunction with the park and National plans to revive the "Superman of America" as a new club, under the title of the "Superman Metropolis Club." Details concerning all the merchandise will be announced in the DC books, as well as through an information center in Metropolis. COMIXSCENE will also carry the data.

Admission to the park will be $1.75 for adults and $1.25 for children. There will be a 25¢ price reduction on each admission for people carrying a comic with Superman on the cover. *The Amazing World of Superman* book, Metropolis edition, will soon be available from the Metropolis Recreation Department, PO Box 809, Metropolis, Illinois 62960 for $2, plus 40¢ postage. It will be 64 oversized pages with numerous reprints, covers and articles, a special poster-map of Krypton and a new "origin" story. The story will be illustrated by Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson, with layouts by Carmine Infantino and dialogue by E. Nelson Bridwell.

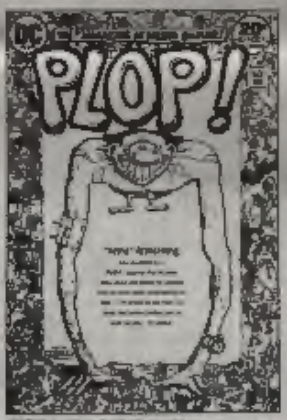
The SHAZAM King-Size Collector's Edition will go on sale in May and will feature 80 pages of full-color including, Captain Marvel adventures, a diorama back cover, a gigantic center-spread pin-up by C. C. Beck, fun pages, some special "how to draw" features and a Beck biography. The Captain Marvel stories in the book include "Sivana's Time Trap" and "The Missing Red Suit." Mary Marvel appears in "The Training of Mary Marvel," and both Talky Tawny and Captain Marvel Junior are featured in stories of their own. The legendary Marvel Family appear in "The Primate Plot," in which a nefarious enemy makes monkeys out of all of them. This is one definitely not to miss!

The *DC Super-Spectacular* 23 is a special *Shazam* issue, featuring old Fawcett reprints from the 1940s.



Features include "Twice Told Tale" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 80, wherein Sivana goes back in time to kill Billy Batson, but fails due to the complex theory that history cannot be changed; "The Origin of Mary Marvel" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 18; the first Marvel Family story from *Marvel Family* 1 with Black Adam; "The Vest Pocket Levitator," a Captain Marvel Jr. story by Mac Raboy; a Mary Marvel and Uncle Marvel story called "The Dognappers" from *Mary Marvel* 17; from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 71, a Captain Marvel and Three Lt. Marvels story "Adventure in Time." Also included will be a Kurt Schaffenberger drawn story from *Marvel Family* 17 called "The Marvel Family Game," in which Freddy Freeman finds a book that tells of an old family curse on the Batson name; the first Mr. Tawny story "The Talking Tiger" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 79 as well as the "Return of Mr. Tawny" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 82. The covers featured on the back of the book will be from *Captain Marvel Adventures* 15 (a painting), 80 and 83, along with *Marvel Family* 1.

Fres h is done, with art by Jerry Grandenetti and Craig Flessel. Joe Simon produced the book, but is not going to remain the editor. Simon is in a department called "research and development," where he more or less packages the books—doing the writing, art and other



technicalities with others—then delivers the pages to Joe Orlando or some other editor to finish up. He will also be handling the *Black Magic*, Young Romance and Young Love in much the same way.

Plop, the 32-page horror comic from National passed through the Comics Code without one change. The peculiar thing is that some of the jokes which passed were once sent through the Code in another form, but rejected. This time they have succeeded in making it through what is now known as a more "liberal" Code.

Plop was originally to have been called *Weird Humor*—which could possibly pave the way for such titles as *Weird Super-Heroes*, *Weird Housewives* and *Weird Weirdos*. Editor Orlando says the comic is a "humorous look at horror," with the first issue carrying a Basil Wolverton cover. The bi-monthly comic will have art by George Evans (who will most likely be doing more comic book work now that *Terry and the Pirates* has been cancelled), Sergio Aragones, Fred Ajcala and Bernie Wrightson. Orlando has layed out the book, which just happens to be one of his pet projects.

Batman 251 will feature "The Joker's Five Way Revenge" by Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams. There will be a Swamp Thing-Batman get-together in the very near future, and that meeting between the Caped Crusader and The Shadow is currently on the boards with scripting by O'Neil. Wrightson's other committments will prevent his working on this project though. Irv Novick will handle the job instead.

Howie Chaykin's creation, Iron Wolf, will debut in *Weird Worlds* with Simonson inks as soon as the

EFB characters are dropped. Iron Wolf, as mentioned before, is a combination philosopher, adventurer, swordsman and does everything but the dinner dishes. Chaykin will co-write and illustrate the 15-page feature.

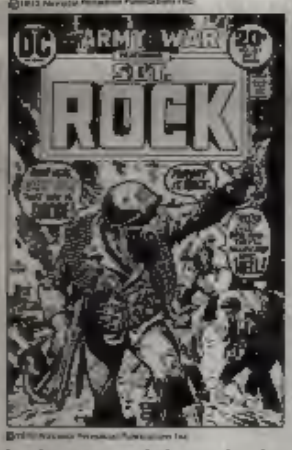
In the *Weird Worlds* letter column from issue 6, editor O'Neil added Sal Amendola, Dick Giordano, Steve Mitchell, Howie Chaykin and Allen Kupperberg to the list of people who make up the Crusty Bunkers.

There is a Sheldon Mayer script called "Is a Snail Human?" scheduled for *Unexpected*, and it will be illustrated by Alex Toth. Jim Starlin may also be doing some art for DC in *Swords of Sorcery* 4, with writing by George Alec Effinger.

There are a number of old characters being revived to be used as back-up features in National books. The Atom will be given his own adventures once again (alternating with Green Arrow and The Human Target in *Action*), written by Elliott Maggin and drawn by Dick Dillin.

Detective will return to the original squared logo with issue 437, under the editorship of Archie Goodwin. Jim Aparo will be handed the art chores on the Batman feature and there are plans to take the character even further back to his original concept of being a deeply mysterious figure. The transition will be a slow one, however. Manhunter will be the back-up feature in the comic.

Swords of Sorcery is still being cancelled, but now the last issue will be 5. Walt Simonson, former fan artist from North Carolina, will



be doing some of the art for the book, besides some inking on other features.

Ken Barr will be doing work in Archie Goodwin's books in the future, one of his first stories appearing in *G.I. Combat* 163, titled "Just a Shot Away," written by Doug Moench. Barr will also be doing covers for Archie, to help relieve Joe Kubert's tremendous work load.

Never a company to accept defeat, National is going to try reviving Deadman again, this time under the direction of Joe Orlando, editor, and Arnold Drake, writer. Deadman will be making his appearance as soon as someone comes up with an angle that will sell the book.

The Spectre will come back from the land of the dead and give it one more try, taking over the cover and lead feature in *Adventure Comics*, beginning with 431. Black Orchid will continue to run in the book as a secondary character. There is also one more Capt. Fear story by Alex Nino that Joe Orlando intends to use, but has not decided just where yet.

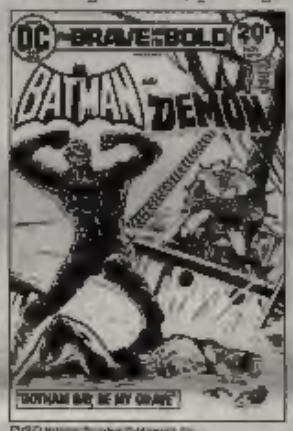
Everyone has undoubtedly noticed the numerous new artists on the mystery and horror books at National. Most of these are working out of a "shop" in the Philippines headed by Tony DeZuniga. Artists like Alex Nino, Nestor and Francisco Redondo, Rico Rival, Alfred Alcala, Sonny Trinidad, Gerry Talaoc and Ruben Yandoc all work under De-

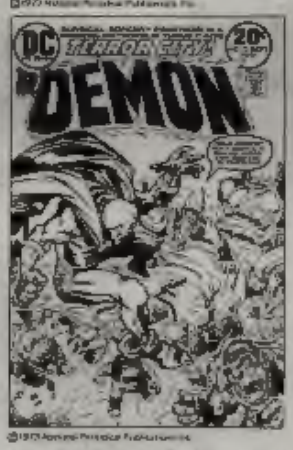
Zuniga's direction after receiving the scripts from the National offices. They generally have a free hand in illustrating the stories and because of the financial rate of exchange, the pay is considered excellent.

Comic books became quite popular in the Philippines during world War II, when visiting GIs brought them to read while on duty in the islands. The kids of that time were attracted to the brightly colored books and once the war was over, their enthusiasm continued to grow, and many went to great lengths to obtain the magazines from the United States. Gradually comic books, and the local people who worked on them, became highly respected and are considered as members of the national Philippines press. The Minister of Commerce, in fact, is a popular man not only because of his high governmental position, but also due to the fact that he has an extensive collection of ECs and *Mad*.

The four color books still exist in the islands. In fact, not too long ago Nestor Redondo owned his own comic company, which featured his name on every book produced—printed much larger than the title of the comic itself. All this goes to show that the artists and writers are as important as the books themselves. It was at this time that DeZuniga worked at the Redondo company, along with most of the other artists now at National.

The great number of Philippine artists is not merely a financial move on the part of DC, but it is also most obvious that these gentlemen have something special going for them. For example, the November issue of *Weird Western* 14 was the best selling DC comic, percentage-





wise, for that month. It was the bright orange cover by DeZuniga, with Jonah Hex staked out on the desert and a rattlesnake about to strike at him that attracted readers to this book, and boosted it to the top of the sales charts. *Weird Western* by the way, will have one issue scripted by Arnold Drake before Mike Fleisher takes over. Drake will concentrate his writing on the *Phantom Stranger* series after that.

One of the new Joe Kubert books, featuring Philippino art, is due out at the end of the year, is already completed. Plans are to complete several issues before initial publication. Both titles are still under wraps. Special announcements and previews on these books will be in upcoming issues of *Comicscene*. Kubert is now attempting to get his schedule caught up to fit these new projects in.

The new Sandman strip by Simon and Kirby will be released in the winter of 1973 and will feature a new Sandman, who can control peoples' dreams. Simon is writing, Kirby editing and pencilling, while Mike Royer inks.

"The Tracking Site" in *Kamandi* 9 features a dwarf called The Misfit, who has a deadly virus that threatens to kill all life on earth. The tale will be continued into the tenth issue. *The Demon* will carry a three-part story in 11, 12 and 13 about a telepathic monster created by the villainous Baron Von Evilstein.

There is a flashback that highlights the earlier life of Baron Von Rakenstein alias Evilstein, midway through the story. In issue 14, the Witch Boy returns.

There is a good chance that *Kamandi, the Last Boy on Earth*, will be in line for his own television program sometime in the future. The book has had very good sales to date and there appear to be interested producers. It has all the elements of a winner.

There is already a one-hour all-National cartoon television show ready for the networks next fall called *Super Friends*. It will, of course, feature the more popular characters, but from what we hear, almost all of the DC characters will make some kind of guest appearances throughout the season. The first shows include Superman, Batman, Robin, Aquaman and Wonder Woman.

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It was a cold day in hell.

A 15-year old boy was picked up for pushing heroin in Harlem. At the elementary school in Philadelphia where I was teaching, two drug related problems were relayed to the school coordinator: a nine year-old boy had been found sniffing glue and a sixth grader was reported coming to school "high."

It was January 1970, another day of poor reading ability, deficient math skills, and a general lack of interest on the part of the students.

Earlier in the school year I had begun testing a new educational device: comics. The reaction had been exciting, but not unexpected. Kids who were turned off by the sight of the printed word, pumped at the chance to read from comics. Color action, adventure: it worked.

Now we had a new problem: DRUGS

No student could learn to read if his mind was somewhere between Seattle and Uranus. In addition, many kids found themselves with questions about drugs and no place but the streets from which to find the answers.

February 1970. If comics were so fantastic in their ability to reach kids, then they had a job to do NOW. With questions being raised about drugs, comics could provide some answers that kids would accept, or at least consider. But what could be done?

During the heyday of the EC comics of the 50's, Al Feldstein, Bill Gaines and Joe Orlando gave us comics' first significant anti-drug story. *The Monkey* was a landmark in that it *DID* deal with drugs. Although Grease, 7-Up, and the rock revivals that frequent concert halls throughout the country may give you a different idea, the 50's were a period of repression. In touching on the drug problem, *The Monkey* was doing something in media which would not be significantly brought into the cinema until *Man With a Golden Arm* made its debut in 1955. The film was a breakthrough in its treatment and presentation of drugs. Its success led to other films such as *Monkey on My Back* in 1957. Still, it was to *The Monkey* that a handful of men took on a subject which the repressive mood of the early '50's deemed unfit for human consumption.

So, why not reproduce *The Monkey*, and give it to the kids as an answer to my "problem?"

There were reasons. First, the audience to which it would be presented is about 8 to 1. *The Monkey* was set in 50's and featured the clothes, language and surroundings of that time. These would be foreign to the kids we wanted to reach and might serve only to confuse them. I wanted them to identify strongly with certain elements in the story. Secondly, the story had a very heavy handed, realistic approach which beat the reader over the head with its point. This approach is out of context in the '70's. Thirdly, to be candid, in 1970, EC had not yet reached its present revived popularity and I had not even seen *The Monkey*.

Back to the comics scene of 1970. Unlike the days of EC, now there was a long-established comics code, (censoring standards) which could be interpreted as being against any drug-related, addiction-type stories. Even if the code was not anti-drug, kids would have to *BUY* the comic to get the message. No, what was needed was a new comic, not about a superhero or a monster, but about kids on the street, and how drugs affected their lives. It had to be short, and it had to be made available everywhere—on the street, in schools, in public urinals. But which artist could tell the story?

TELL A STORY! A few years earlier, an artist named Jim Steranko had premiered on a strip called *Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD*, and in the short period of time that followed, he had amazed fans and pros alike with his ability to tell a story. His sense of graphics would enable us to construct a story that 8 to 14 year olds could understand and with which they could identify. Steranko could do a fantastic job on a drug comic. Was he willing? Was he willing to do it *FOR FREE*?

It was March and the answer was

YES. Despite a newly-found profession as paperback illustrator, Steranko WOULD do another comics story. He agreed that hard drugs were a problem that deserved as many devices as possible to combat them. He agreed that educating kids to the dangers of drugs was something that should start young, at the elementary level. Further, he agreed that the drug problem was hitting hardest in urban areas, and that children could benefit from a tale set in this locale. Finally, he agreed to do the comic with no expectation of economic remuneration.

The next step was mine. "Send a script to me in Reading," I did.

The months that followed were a period of discussion, experimentation and conception. Drawing upon certain elements of my script for atmosphere and characterization, Steranko wrote a story of his own—a tale in a classic mold—a story of two "brothers" who choose to walk different paths. It was a story of the city, of the inner city, of a neighborhood, of *The Block*.

I received the pencils in the mail, gave them to John Costanza to letter, then I sent them back to Steranko. Some corrections were made on drug "lingo" and the story was inked. Stunning. Time, effort, persistance, care and money had been poured into this non-profit project. *The Block* was released and became an immediate critical hit. Block university students dug it. Elementary school teachers gave their approval. More important, the limited number of kids who saw it, in a projected version, were delighted. Young 5th, 6th graders who had been problems to their teachers became wrapped up in the story of Billy Lee and Leroy. The kids were reading *AND THEY WERE LEARNING!*

Our expectations were confirmed. *The Block* worked. We were now faced with the task of flooding the streets and the schools with it. I went to see the education director of the Model Cities office in North Philadelphia. "It's what's needed," he said. "Nice job."

I thought I had him hooked. "It's very cheap to print as a tabloid. Will Model Cities do it?"

"Like to, sure, but its not in our jurisdiction to put up money for this thing. I know its stupid, but that's the way it is. Sorry."

Dejected, I started to pack, then he spoke again, "We'd be happy to get the comics out on the street for you if you can get them printed." Okay that was half my problem.

With distribution handled by Model Cities and the Fellowship Program, what remained to be acquired was enough cash to get *The Block* printed. Thanks to the University of Pennsylvania's office of External Affairs, we shortly thereafter had our funds.

By summer, *The Block* had been distributed to thousands of people in North Philly and organizations in other parts of the city were asking for copies. Bill Cambell, Director of the Community Committee on Drug Abuse, epitomized the critical reaction we were receiving when he wrote, "We, here at CCDA were impressed. *The Block* did bring the point across, which is very real in today's life-style." Recognition was also coming in on a national level. William Cray of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association called the project, "Without a question, a splendid effort."

We set our sights higher. City-wide and national distribution. On to New York City.

A meeting was set up with Robert Palese, Manhattan's Borough President Percy Sutton's agent for drug abuse education. The plan was to propose city wide distribution through N.Y.C. schools of *The Block*. I was armed with a stack of laudatory mail from Gene Cooney of Sesame Street fame, touting it as a "highly professional job." George Puckett, of Model Cities in Atlanta, writing, "Steranko's work suits the need perfectly." Participants of Phoenix House rated *The Block* as "realistic." Palese was impressed, as was Percy Sutton. They would have an answer for me soon.

In the meantime, *The Block* was receiving a great deal of attention from educators. The success of the code, and the format, in the classroom was heartening. Comics worked! Parents called schools to thank them for presenting *The Block*. Acceptance of the inner-city based story transcended racial lines, just as Steranko had hoped it would. Predominately white classes seemed to enjoy it as much as their black counterparts. A representative of a class of reading teachers at New York University wrote, "Everybody wants to see *The Block*!" Two weeks later she wrote again, "As a teacher with 18 years experience, I was delighted with *The Block* in form and content, your comic book is ideally suited for use in urban areas. I look forward to using *The Block* at Project Return, a city sponsored program for addicts between the ages of 14 and 18, many of whom want to return to school."

The Block had found a home with educators. To facilitate this development, I wrote a teacher's guide to accompany the comic. It discussed the many ways in which the story and tabloid format could be used with different age groups.

Very young children could color it. Elementary school students and junior high school students could act out the story. This method was used with a significant amount of success. Different students took the main roles of Leroy and Billy Lee. Others took bit parts, or did the narration. *The Block* became a script for a classroom play, with the enactment taking place on paper instead of on a stage. At the West Philadelphia Community Free School, high school students even turned the comic story into a rock opera!

The Teacher's Guide stressed the main concepts of the comic, including this parallel. "Billy Lee had his kicks with drugs. Leroy had his kicks with music. One difference between the two is that once you take drugs and they are inside of you, you must wait for the effects to wear off while with music, you can shut it off or disregard it any time you want. You can control the music, the drug controls you."

I sent the roughs for the guide up to Steranko. He made corrections and suggestions. We went to press, and soon there were two publications about *The Block*.

In New York, the concept of drugs in comics had been receiving quite a bit of attention. NFP Publisher

Carmine Infantino, and the then-editor of Marvel Comics, Stan Lee, prepared plans for anti-drug comics. Thus began one of the more interesting episodes of recent history of comics.

Looking back on the past EC days, the Kubert/Kanigher presentation of Jackie Johnson, a black supporting character at a time when black supporting characters were not "in fashion," stuck out as one of the few examples when a big comics publisher waded in controversial waters. Then, in 1970 DC went ahead and did some more wading with their "relevant" Green Lantern series. GL/GA plunged into such topics as ghetto poverty (No Evil Shall Escape My Sight), Indian affairs (Ulysses Star is Still Alive) and Appalachia (Journey to Desolation).

Behind the scenes, Adams and others were pressing NFP to hit the drug problem in their GL/GA series, but NFP decided that such a move would be contingent on a change in the comics code. The Code, however, refused to approve such stories on the basis of an obscure interpretation of a code clause that did not permit the depiction of intimate details as to how a crime is committed. Arnold Drake's heroin-smuggling Deadman in *Strange Adventures* was as close as NFP had come.

Meanwhile, at Marvel, Stan Lee decided to work outside The Code. Realizing the positive effects that comics could have on the education of youth concerning drugs, he forged ahead with a two-part Spider-man story that included a drug-related subplot. A dead junkie was planned for the first cover.

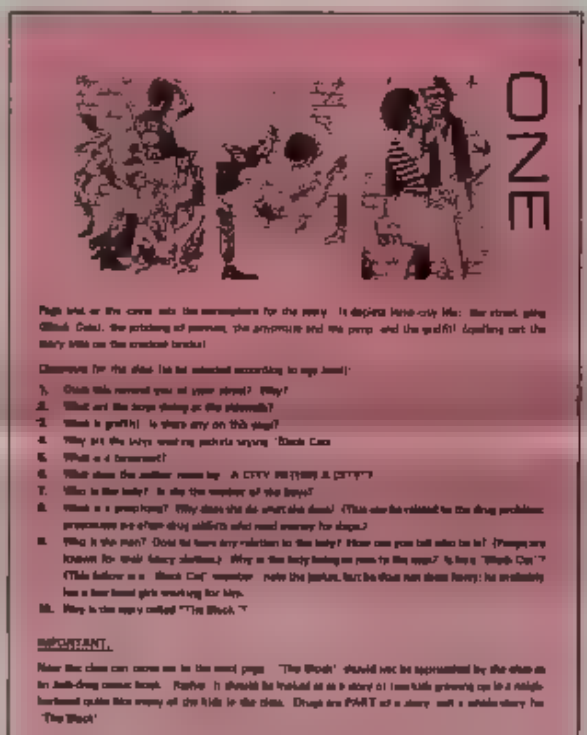
The Code refused to approve Marvel's story. In a startling and unprecedented move, Stan Lee and publisher Martin Goodman decided to put the book on the stands WITHOUT Code approval. The *N.Y. Times* put "a story about the story" on the first page of its second section.

NFP's Infantino was upset about Marvel's action. Out of respect for the Code, NFP had withheld doing its drug-oriented story until a decision was made on revisions being proposed for the code. Among them was a revision that would enable the depiction of anti-drug stories to be done with code approval.

Shortly after this incident the code was revised. There was an understanding that anti-drug stories would be allowed. By the summer of 1971, the first part of a 5-issue GL/GA drug story appeared, "Snowbirds Don't Fly." It was soon followed by "They Say It'll Kill Me, But They Won't Say When." By the end of the year, at least four commercial comics with an anti-drug theme had been released. All had superheroes involved. ZAP! POW! Superheroes! How could they fit into the dirty, hungry, depressing world of drugs? Not well enough.

Lee's Spider-man story showed us a nervous Harry Osborne faced with a shifty-eyed mysterious drug pusher, who looked like he just walked out of a used car lot. It just didn't make it realistically, especially when there was a web-shooting human insect running around on the other pages. The GL/GA were definitely better, but still remained, by nature of the frame of reference of the comic, a superhero story. NFP and Marvel had to deal with false figures at the same time that they dealt with drugs, and those figures spoke better for ZAP and POW than they did for relevance. Thus, while both efforts were important, they had serious drawbacks.

A kid who was reading one of the stories was faced with two atmospheres: fantasy and realism. To get the anti-drug message of the story he would have to understand what the authors were trying to do by mixing the two. In addition, poor kids who faced the drug problem every day would have to buy the comic to get the message. Even if the 15¢ or 25¢ was no problem, distribution



Teacher's Guide

to print stand is very sparse. Finding a GL/GA or Spider-man book could be a problem.

We felt that the realistic, simple short, non-superhero approach of *The Block* might have a better chance of being understood by 8-11 year olds. We hoped that free distribution would help us reach many more of them. Thus, when Marc Iglauer, then-President of NFP, offered to publish *The Block* in the back of one of DC's books, we declined.

Having turned down the President of NFP, we awaited word from Percy Sutton's people. The answer came in the form of a letter from the chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Borough President of Manhattan on Narcotics Addiction Control, Robert Rosen. "We have found its presentation of the problem, via a medium applicable to a large audience of young people, to be precise, realistic, and certainly potentially useful in the classroom situation. In fact, it is our intention in the near future to make available a quantity of both texts - comic and guide - on a test basis, together with a contest to ascertain response, for distribution to certain schools within the Borough of Manhattan." Palese informed me that distribution of the entire box ough would be something that would follow the test.

It was 1970. Back in Philadelphia *The Block* was going into another printing, this time sponsored by the Rebound Program of the Children's Hospital.

In Hollywood, it was the time for the Black superstars. *Shaft*, *Slaughter*, Then, *Superfly* which turned out to be a drug-related film. Unfortunately, it popularized cocaine. For an anti-drug film, we had to wait until later in the year. *Lady Sings The Blues* came at us in a grand Hollywood manner and it presented a strong anti-drug theme tied to a joggled version of the life of Billy Holiday, played memorably by Diana Ross.

In Berkeley, the antithesis of Hollywood's slick, shiny product was being produced. Gilbert Shelton was turning out the second volume of the "Collected Freak Bros." comix. Claiming that "Dope will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no dope," Shelton's comix epitomized the light-hearted underground literary approach to getting stoned. Drugs in general were being treated in underground comics as an acceptable form of entertainment, refreshment or "enlightenment." They were part of the underground's triple-threat subject matter: sex, violence and drugs.

An exception to the standard approach to drugs in comix was Robert Crumb's 2-page public service piece on speed. A mini-classic of parody and charicature, "Street Corner Daze" admonished the reader that, "Next time some speed freak offers you a hit just smile and say 'None for me thanks!'" Of course, Mr Natural said all! Typical Crumb, but very effective in making a public service announcement.

Meanwhile, 1973 in New York, a new plan was brewing for our comic publication of *The Block* as a feature in one of the world's largest Black-oriented newspaper, *The Amsterdam News*. After a month of consultations we received a favorable response. Photostats now lie in their offices, awaiting publication, contingent on available space.

Some things are brewing on a national level too. *The Block* is making the rounds at the National Institute of Mental Health where it has already received the approval of Dr Louise Richards, a specialist on drug abuse. We are also on the brink of negotiations with J. Morris Anderson, publisher of *Mass Black America Magazine*. This may result in *The Block* being part of a periodical that has a 400,000 circulation. A reader could tear out *The Block* and give it to young members of his family.

The Block has done a job. The project has brought approval from Rev. Jesse Jackson, Mrs. Hubert H. Humphrey, educators, parents, drug and community agencies and an uncounted number of young children. Steranko's drug-stricken Billy Lee has opened doors to communication on the issue of addiction in many classrooms. Out on the street, the word of "badass pushers" and "living junkies" has been challenged by a medium which kids accept.

The Block will not solve the drug problem. It will not stop the flow of heroin into our cities. *The Block* is not a cure. *The Block* IS a catalyst. A tool towards a goal. One match for a very large candle. A small piece of hope. A word of caution. A first step.

You can help. Show *The Block* to a young friend. If you know any agency or school or publication that would be interested in *The Block* let us know who to reach. If you're in New York, call Mr Hicks or Mr Adams at the *Amsterdam News*, AC 7-1800 and tell them to hurry up on getting *The Block* to press. In the words of the cop on page 8, "Let's get movin!"

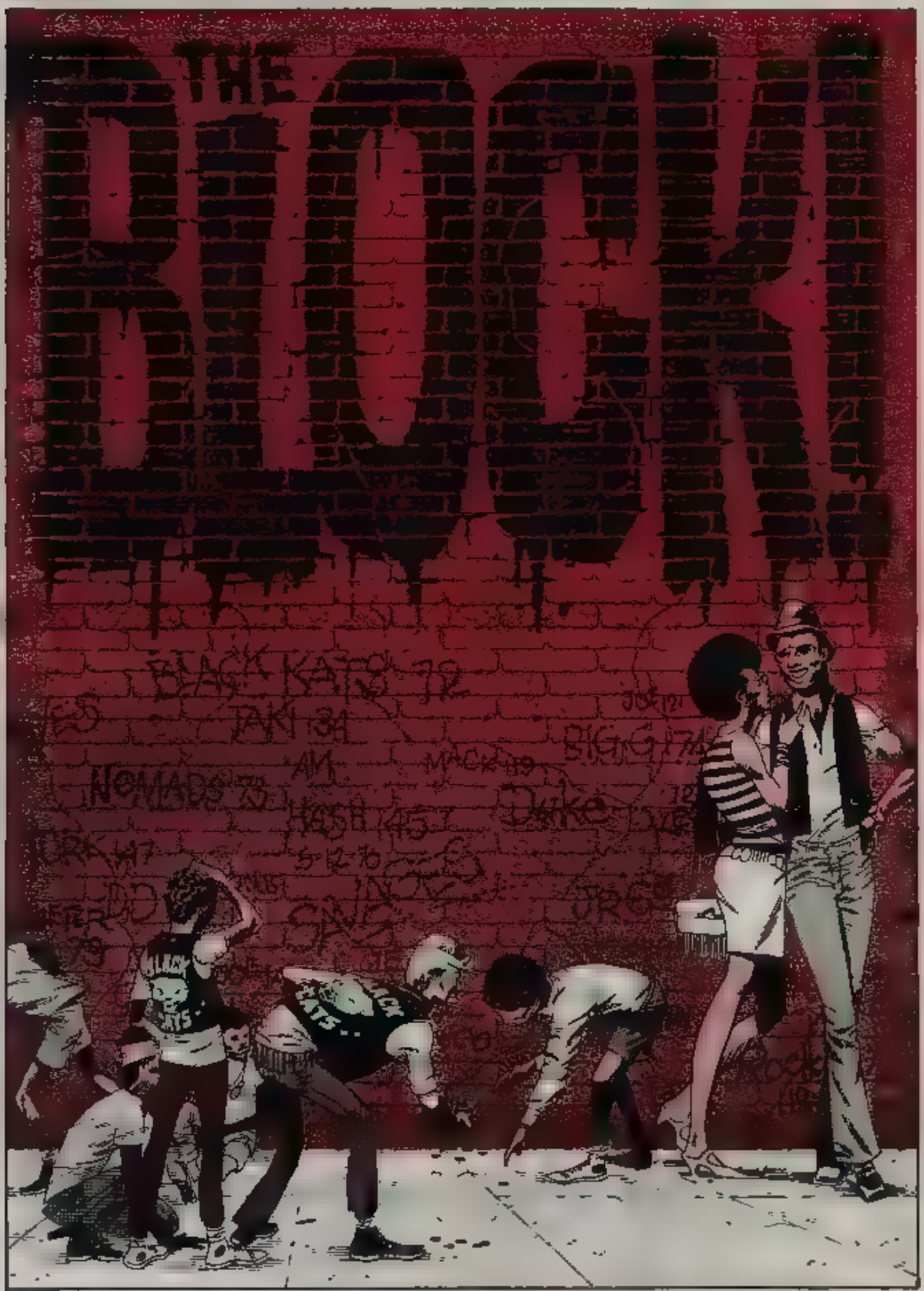
Byron Preiss

Please address info on schools and agencies to:

Byron Preiss; 1304 Glenwood Rd., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

THERE'S ONE IN EVERY CITY... A SECTION PACKED SOLID WITH TENEMENT BUILDINGS, CARS AND PEOPLE... *A CITY WITHIN A CITY*... ITS CRUMBLING APARTMENTS SPILLING CHILDREN ONTO THE STREETS AND SIDEWALKS. THIS IS A STORY ABOUT TWO OF THOSE CHILDREN. A STORY ABOUT THEM AND THEIR CITY... AND THE SECTION THEY CALL...

THE BLOCK



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IT ALL BEGAN ON THE SCORCHING SUMMER DAY THAT BILLY LEE WILLIAMS WAS BORN. HIS MOTHER SAID HE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BABY EVER BORN ON THE BLOCK.

THAT SAME WEEK, LEROY JEFFERSON WAS BORN IN A HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET! IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT THEY GREW UP AS THE TWO BEST FRIENDS ON THE BLOCK...

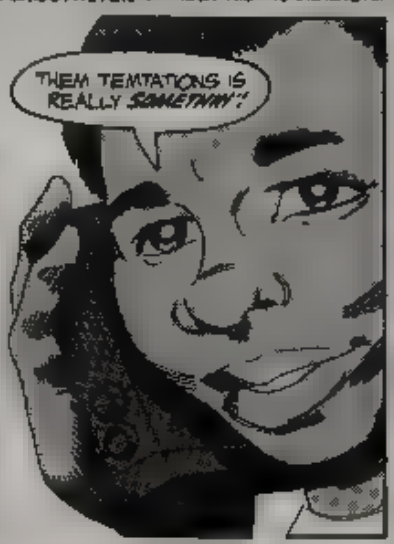
AND FRIENDS ALWAYS STUCK TOGETHER. THEY GREW AND PLAYED AND FOUGHT TOGETHER. AND TOGETHER, THEY JOINED THE GANG THAT HUNG OUT ON THE BLOCK...

AND THE[illegible]TEN GOT IN TROUBLE TOGETHER TOO AND TROUBLE WAS SOMETHING THE BLOCK HAD PLENTY OF.

THEY WERE *LUCKY* AND NEVER CAUGHT! BUT THERE WERE TIMES WHEN THE BOYS PAID THEIR DUES ANYWAY

AS LEROY GOT OLDER HE GOT MORE AND MORE HUNG UP ON MUSIC. HE WAS ALMOST *NEVER* WITHOUT HIS TRANSISTOR.

WHILE BILLY LEE WAS OUT ON THE BLOCK, LEROY STAYED AT HOME READING COMICS AND LISTENING TO HIS RADIO.



THEN, LEROY GOT A JOB AS A DELIVERY BOY AND SOMEHOW IT SEEMED TO MAKE THE TWO FRIENDS DRIFT APART...

HEY, LOOKIT WHAT'S COMIN'.. LEROY *PAPERHANGERS* JEFFERSON!
WHITEY KEEPIN' YOU BUSY DOWN ON THE PLANTATION, *PAPERHANGERS?*
LEAST I GOT SOME COINS JINGLING 'ROUND IN MY POCKET! SOMETHIN' *WRONG* WITH THAT?
WELL THERE'S PLENTY A WAYS OF GETTIN CASH, *PIG!!*
SURE BILLY LEE...*IF* YOU WANT TO DO TIME IN *THE MAN'S* JAIL
YEAH? WELL, EVERYTHING'S BEEN *COOL* SO FAR! GET YOURSELF TOGETHER, MAN...*IT'S ALL KICKS!* THIS IS WHERE IT'S AT!

COOL IT, MY MAN! WE'RE ONLY JIVIN YOU 'CAUSE WE NEVER SEE YOU AROUND THE BLOCK ANYMORE, TOO BUSY TO SEE YOUR *FRIENDS?* TOO BUSY HANGIN' 'ROUND THE RECORD SHOP?
DON'T FORGET YOU LIVE ON THE BLOCK *JUST LIKE US!*

NOW HOW ABOUT CRASHIN' TJ'S PARTY TOMORROW NIGHT? WE GOT SOME *REAL FINE STUFF!*
DON'T FORGET, YOU'RE A *BLACK CAT!* YOU'RE ONE OF *US!*
SORRY BILLY LEE WHAT I AM *FIRST* IS A BLACK MAN

THEN YOU BETTER SHOW UP AN' HAVE SOME *REAL* KICKS MAN
IT'LL BE JUST LIKE IT ALWAYS WAS HUH PAL! *THE BLACK CATS!*
RIGHT ON! BE EXPECTIN YOU, LEROY 'O O'CLOCK
ELSE WE GONNA HAVE TO START CALLIN YOU .. *TOM!*
SPARE A QUARTER FOR A BROTHER?

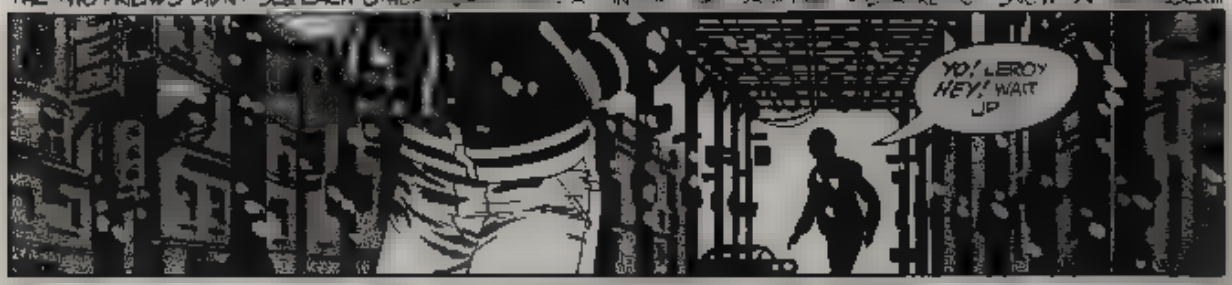
BUT LEROY NEVER SHOWED UP! AS HIS FEELING FOR MUSIC GREW, SO DID THE TIME HE SPENT ENJOYING IT.

MUCH OF WHAT HE EARNED WAS SPENT ON HIS FAVORITE SINGING GROUPS... LEARNING THE WORDS, STUDYING THE STYLE...

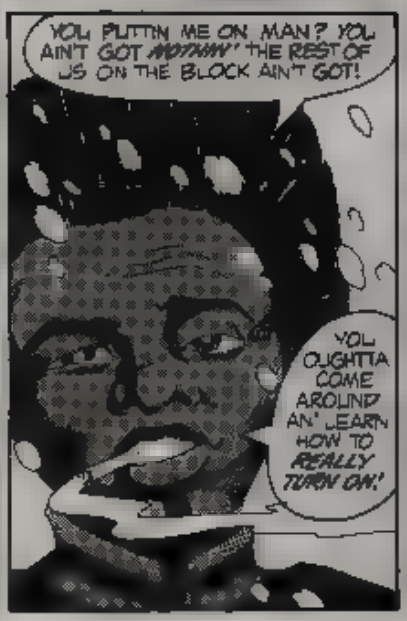
BILLY LEE SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME DREAMING AND SCHEMING ABOUT THINGS HE WANTED... AND DREAMING WAS WHAT HE DID BEST.

EVERYONE LIKED BILLY LEE BECAUSE HE WAS THE MOST EASY-GOING KID ON THE BLOCK! NOTHING EVER BOTHERED HIM...

THE TWO FRIENDS DIDN'T SEE EACH OTHER [illegible] 'INT [illegible] DRIPPED [illegible] SNOW ON THE BLOCK...



EVERYBODY'S BEEN ASKIN' ABOUT YOU... WANNA KNOW WHERE YOU BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF, LEROY!
BILLY LEE, GOT A COUPLA THINGS GOIN' FOR ME NOW, Y KNOW!


YOU PUTTIN ME ON, MAN? YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' THE REST OF US ON THE BLOCK AIN'T GOT!
YOU OUGHTTA COME AROUND AN' LEARN HOW TO REALLY TURN ON!

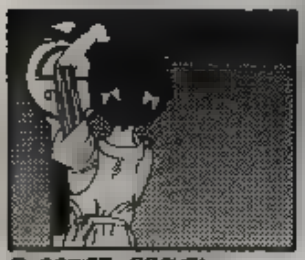
YOU GUYS CAN TURN ON ALL YOU WANT' ME, I GOT OTHER PLANS! IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE... WATCH ME!
WE'LL BE WATCHIN' ALL RIGHT! WATCHIN' YOU MAKE A FOOL OUTTA YOURSELF!

MAYBE BILLY LEE'S RIGHT AFTER ALL! I AIN'T GOT ANY MORE'N HE DOES! JUST A SHELF FULLA MUSIC!
AN I GUESS ANYBODY CAN HAVE THAT!
MAYBE I AM LIKE ALL THE REST ON THE BLOCK! MAYBE I BEEN PEDDLING THOSE GROCERIES FOR NOTHIN'!
KNOK! KNOK!
LEROY! GET IT IN HERE, MAN! YOU BEEN HOLDIN' US UP FOR ALMOST AN HOUR! WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?
COOL! I AIN'T IN THE MOOD FOR A LECTURE!
I BEEN THINKIN'.. MAYBE I BEEN KNOCKIN' MYSELF OUT FOR NOTHIN'! ALL THIS TIME... KIDDIN' MYSELF THAT SOMETHING GOOD'S GONNA HAPPEN... WORKIN LIKE A FOOL 'STEAD OF HAVING FUN LIKE THE REST OF THE KIDS ON THE BLOCK!
KNOCK IT OFF! WE HAVEN'T BEEN PRACTICING ALL THESE MONTHS TO START SPLITTING UP NOW! GET YOUR HEAD STRAIGHT!
AIN'T NO TIME TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF, BOY IF YOU WANNA GET SOMEWHERE, YOU GOT TO WORK, WORK HARD! NO GROUP EVER MADE IT ANY OTHER WAY! DON'T YOU FORGET IT!
OK, GUESS I GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE! WE'LL TRY IT YOUR WAY!
'SIDES, WE GOT A COUPLA NEW TUNES TO LEARN FOR OUR FIRST GIG NEXT WEEK! SO LET'S GO!
AS THE MONTHS FLEW BY LEROY'S ROCK GROUP BEGAN TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES.. WHILE BILLY LEE STARTED A LONG DOWNHILL SLIDE.. BILLY LEE WAS IN TROUBLE...
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
JAN
FEB
BILLY LEE STUMBLED DOWN THE BLOCK UNTIL...
HEY! BILLY LEE WHAT THE HELL.. YOU DOIN'? YOU KNOW MY PAD IS NOT!
I M SICK.. SICK! QUICK, GIVE ME SOMETHING.. QUICK!
I AIN'T GOT NOTHIN MAN! I'M CLEAN! THE HEAT'S BEEN AROUND! C'MON UP ON THE ROOF
YOU NEED SOME AIR... CLEAR YOUR HEAD!
WHAT'S MAKIN' YOU UPTIGHT, BILLY LEE? YOU ON SPEED? ACID? REDS? YOU BEEN SHOOTING H?
5

MEANWHILE, ON THE STREET...
HEY! LOOK WHO'S BACK IT'S JEROY!
JEROY'S COME BACK TO THE BLOCK
HEY, MAN! EVERYBODY BEEN TALKIN' ABOUT YOU...SAYIN YOU GETTIN TO BE A REAL MILLIONAIRE!!
YEAH; LISTENIN' TO YOU ON THE RADIO!
HI, MISTER JEFFERSON! HE'S RIGHT., WE HEAR YOU ALL THE TIME AN' WE'RE PROUD OF YOU TOO; YOU SAID YOU WERE GONNA BE SOMEBODY!
THANKS, JAN! WE JUST GOT SOME GOOD BREAKS, THAT'S ALL
C'MON YOU GOT TO BE KIDDIN ME.
WE JUST HAPPENED TO BE AT THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, OF COURSE WE WERE READY, ALL PRACTICED UP!
THIS MAN COMES OVER AND SAYS 'HEY, YOU KIDS EVER THOUGHT OF DOIN' A RECORD?' THAT'S ALL THERE WAS TO IT
ONE WAY
FOR A WHILE IN THE BEGINNING, I WAS READY TO CALL IT QUITS,' WHAT A MISTAKE THAT WOULD 'A BEEN, DIG?
HEY! HOW'S THE BLACK CATS?' AN' MAYBE WE CAN FIND BILLY LEE!
HAVEN'T SEEN TOO MUCH OF HIM LATELY!
EVERYTHING ELSE IS THE SAME AS IT ALWAYS WAS'
DID YA KNOW YOUR RECORD'S IN THE STORE WINDOW? I'LL SHOW YOU
BLACK CATS
AND UP ON THE ROOF...
MAN YOU'RE REAL SICK. YOU OUGHTTA GO TO THE HOSPITAL...
THEY'LL BRING YOU DOWN REAL SLOW AN' TAKE CARE OF YOU.' WADDA YA SAY, HUH?
SHOVE IT! GO OUT AN' GET ME A CAP QUICK
I TOLD YOU I'M HOT! THE PIGS GOT ME SPOTTED! I AIN'T CUTTIN MY THROA—
HEY!
LOOK OUT YOU'RE LOSIN' YOUR BALAN—
GOD! NO NOOOO!!

BLACK
BUT BILLY HAD FOUND HIS PEACE..
HEY, WHAT WAS THAT! YOU NEAR THAT JAN?
IT SOUNDED LIKE .. WELL, LIKE.
FORGET IT! YOU FEEL TOO GOOD TO BE HASSLED BY ANY BAD NEWS NOW, WHEN YOU'RE CONCERNED, EVERY-THING'S COOL!
OK! C'MON DOWN TO THE PIZZA SHOP! I'M BUYIN'
YEAH, PROBABLY JUS SOME DRUNK ANYWAY!
CITY AMBULANCE
NO TURN
THE ... PAST THEM AS THEY WALKED ... LIFE.
HEY! LOOK OUT.. HERE COMES THE AMBULANCE AN THE PO-LEESE!
WHEW. HE WON'T NEED AN AMBULANCE HE'S DONE!
IT'S THE WILLIAMS KID, AWRIGHT!
YEAH! SOME-BODY BETTER CALL HIS MAMA
"T SEEMED ONLY FITTING THAT BILLY LEE'S GANG GIVE THE WORD.. THE BLOCK RANG WITH THEIR YELL TO HIS FIFTH FLOOR APARTMENT.. A CALL HIS MOTHER HAD DREADED WOULD COME..
BLACK CATS
7

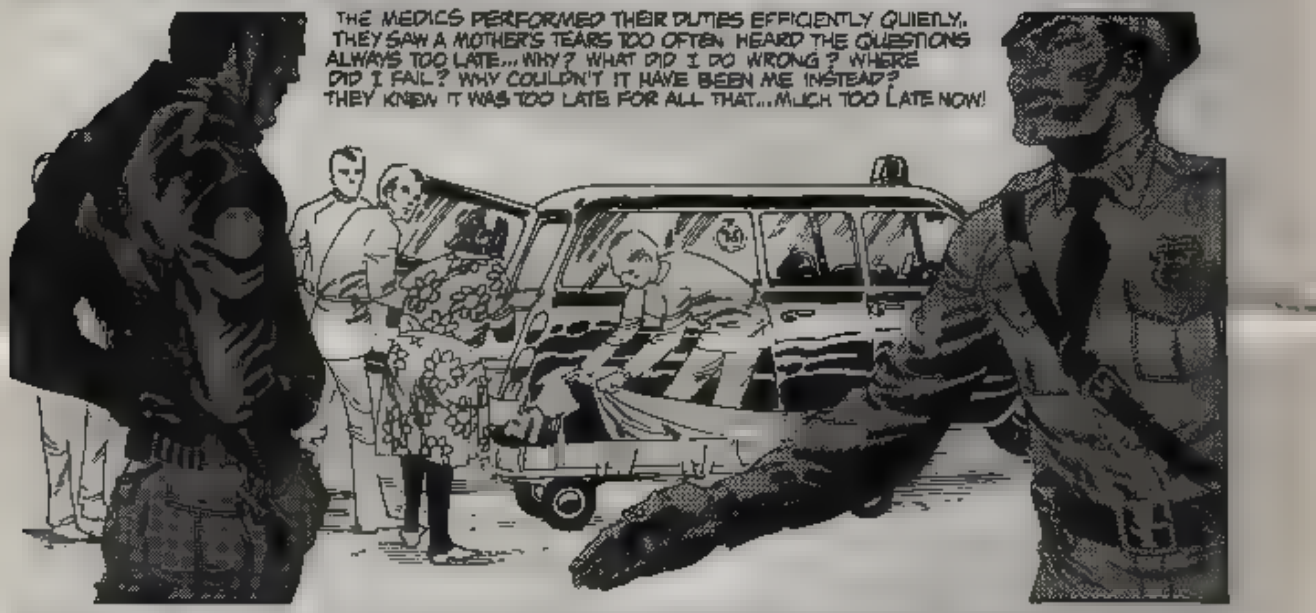
BILLY'S MOTHER CHOKED WITH *RAGE* AS SHE BRUSHED THROUGH THE CROWD, THEN SHE SAW.



BLOODIED, BROKEN, WAS IT HER BOY? SHE COULDN'T *BELIEVE* IT

...LOOKS LIKE AN *ACCIDENT*, MA'AM! LOOKS LIKE HE FELL OFF THE ROOF! DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE! SORRY!
IS IT HIM? IS IT MY BOY? *PLEASE*... DON'T LET IT BE...

THE MEDICS PERFORMED THEIR DUTIES EFFICIENTLY QUIETLY. THEY SAW A MOTHER'S TEARS TOO OFTEN HEARD THE QUESTIONS ALWAYS TOO LATE... WHY? WHAT DID I DO WRONG? WHERE DID I FAIL? WHY COULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN ME INSTEAD? THEY KNEW IT WAS TOO LATE FOR ALL THAT... MUCH TOO LATE NOW!



YEAH, THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED! LEROY CRIED WHEN HE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE ACCIDENT LATER THAT NIGHT! HIS GROUP SANG HYMNS AT THE FUNERAL, THEN WENT ON TO BECOME TOP SELLING RECORD STARS! BILLY LEE WAS *FORGOTTEN* BY ALMOST EVERYONE EXCEPT LEROY AND A FEW OTHERS...

OTHERS FOR WHOM IT IS NOT YET TOO LATE.. OTHERS WHO *STILL HAVE TIME*... OTHERS WHO STILL LIVE ON

...THE BLOCK!

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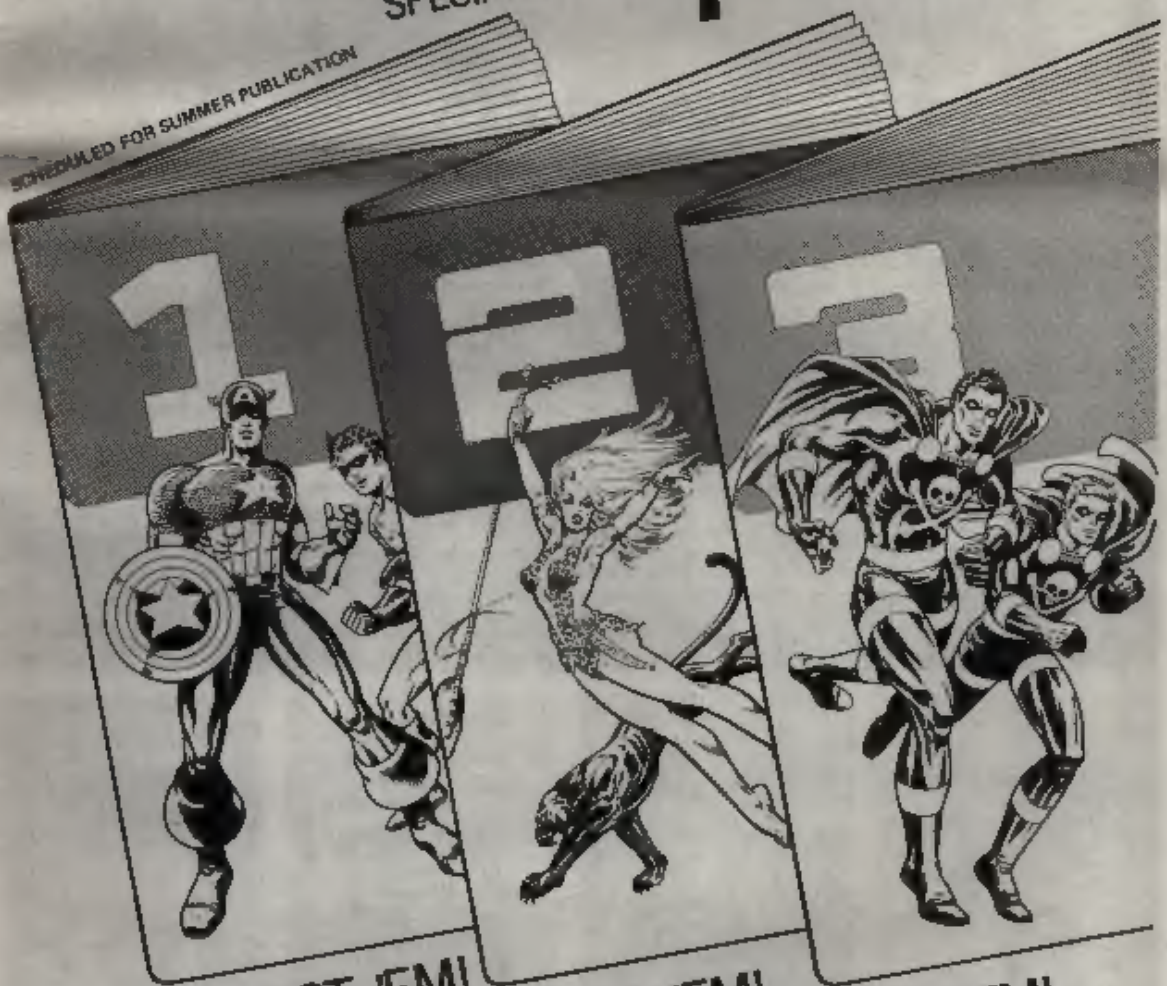

COLLECT 'EM! COLOR 'EM! COPY 'EM!

Bruce Elliott 1915-1972

He was the kind of man you'd meet and never forget for the rest of your life.

I knew him through my affiliation with magic. As a kid, I had studied Bruce's work on the subject. We met after I wrote several of my own magic books and somehow a long-term friendship developed. Over the years, Bruce became a kind of father to me, although I'm not sure who adopted whom.

As a writer, Bruce worked in every form of media. He edited and published **The Phoenix**, a trade journal for magicians in the early 40's. ("Some of the best close-up effects magic's ever seen!"); Scripted stories of comic books including Street & Smith's Nick Carter series in **The Shadow**, Captain Marvel and the mystical Red Dragon.

He followed Walter Gibson (who was like his father) as a chronicler of The Shadow, penning novels such as "The Blackest Mail," "Murder in White," "Svengali Kill," and "Ten Glass Eyes." His adventures of the Mystery Man of the Pulps were written when editorial policy dictated Crampton be played up as a detective.

His full name was Bruce Walter Gardner Lively Stacey Elliott, out of which he composed a host of pseudonyms he hacked on crime magazine tales and pulp fiction. The **Flash Gordon** TV series carried the Elliott byline. ("Each show was produced on a budget of $37.50!")

As a Fantasy and science fiction author, Bruce scribed a score of memorable yarns including "The Last Magician," "Fable for the Interregnum Between WW II and WW III," "The Devil is a Sick Angel," and "Wolves Don't Cry," one of the most widely anthologized pieces of fiction ever. ("I think 'Wolves' was ripped-off again in Albania last year!")

Among his four magic books are "Classic Secrets of Magic" and "Magic as a Hobby." All have been translated into foreign languages and are considered standard texts on the subject. As a novelist, Bruce wrote over a dozen books including "You'll Die Laughing," "Asylum Earth," "The Knife in Grandfather's Neck" and "One is a Lonely Number." ("Christ! I write the book and the song's a hit!")

"Since 1955, he edited a succession of magazines such as **Playcraft, Tempo, Dude, Gent** ("Remember the layout where I portrayed the Black Knight of Germany, Baron Von Nasty?"), **Rogue** and **The Rest.** He was currently working as an editor for MacFadden-Bartell Publications.

If there was a subject about which he was not knowledgable, his friends never realized it. He knew more about people and things than anyone I've ever met. ("Sure I remember Sax Rohmer—he used to live near us, down on 27th Street!")

He was always ready with his own brand of advice. ("Never end a sentence with a preposition—unless you feel like it!")

Having lunch with Bruce was always an adventure, whether he took you to a Thursday gathering of the self-styled mystery magic writers aficionados, "The Witch Doctors Club," where Clayton Rawson or John Dickson Carr might show up, or to a rendezvous with a couple of ladies who just flew into the country.

Elliott was outrageously charming and sophisticated, looking more like a sorcerer than the devil himself. You could never accurately guess him. Several years ago, I asked Bruce to give his old friend and magic companion, Orson Welles, a phone call when he was staying in Manhattan. Raising one satanic eyebrow, Elliott growled, "Heck with it—let him call me!"

Last November Bruce was involved in an automobile accident which resulted in a four month coma. On Wednesday, March 29, he entered the shadow of death.

The following Sunday, the people who loved him gathered at one of his favorite bars and toasted him for the last time.

STERANKO

GOLD KEY NEWS

As a rule, GOLD KEY is one of those "other" companies that rarely gets mentioned in fanzines or comic news-sheets. Perhaps then, this will be a first—a hopefully regular column about what's happening at Gold Key. First of all, there are two different Gold Key offices for comics—one being stationed in New York and producing such titles as *Turok, Dark Shadows, Grimm's Ghost Stories, Star Trek, Ripley's Believe It Or Not, Twilight Zone* and *Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery*. The Hollywood office handles the comics licensed by the film and TV studios (*Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, Lidsville*, etc.), plus serious books, such as *Jungle Twins, Brothers of The Spear, Mystery Comics Digest, Dagar The Invincible* and *The Occult Files of Dr. Spektor*. I write all new scripts for *Mystery Comics Digest*, a few scripts for the other GK digests and animated titles, and have created and written *Dagar* and *Dr. Spektor*.

Among the "new" titles which will probably be issued in the near future from GK are reprint books of *Mighty Samson* and *Space Family Robinson*. The rumors that *Magnus—Robot Fighter* may go back into print are just that—rumors. Russ Manning is too busy with his 48-page *Tarzan* albums to even consider going back to Magnus. Anyway, he has no desire to go back to GK. There is yet a complete *Magnus* issue, scripted by Gardner Fox, which has never been printed. That issue, incidentally, contains a Sci-Fi text story which was my first professional sale to a comic book company. It was titled "The Amiable Computer."

Dagar and *Spektor* are written about a year in advance. This is not so much company policy as it is the editor's desire to keep me paying the rent. As of this writing, I've already completed the scripts of *Dagar* through the 7th issue and the same amount for *Dr. Spektor*. The news about what is coming in *Dagar* and the book's creation is a story in itself, which I'll relate in the next issue of *COMIXSCENE*.

The first issue of *Dr. Spektor* (featuring the vampire originating in *Mystery Comics Digest*) is the only one that will feature a 25-page complete story. The "powers that be" at the NY branch of Western Publishing Company feel that no one could ever possibly be interested in stories of this nature that run to such length. So the second issue has a 13-page story about Spektor while the rest of the book is a tale narrated by Spektor. With the 3rd issue the stories starring Spektor run anywhere from 10 to 15 pages, while the stories he narrates are either 7 or 9 pages each.

In upcoming issues, Spektor (which I pronounce "Spek-ture") becomes involved with the Mummy (which first appeared in "Mask of the Mummy" *Mystery Comics Digest* 1) a ghostly warlock, Jekyll and Hyde, Frankenstein's Monster, and (figure this one out!) *Dagar*, Tragg (the caveman from *Mystery Comics Digest*) and Ostellus from *Dagar* 1). For those of you who really keep track of such things, Simbar the lionman (from *Mystery Comics Digest* 3) will appear in at least two back-up stories in *Dr. Spektor*; the 6th issue has Sinbad's origin. Barbarian hero Durne (from the same issue of *Digest*) appears in a flashback sequence in "Death Between Floors," the second story in *Spektor* 4. More on Durne and his (thus far) five comic book appearances in the next "special barbarian" issue.

This may sound as if GK is starting to do cross-over stories. GK frowns on such continuity gimmicks believing that 1) no one will know both characters or read two consecutive issues and 2) they would be "catering" to the hard-core comic book fans and fanzine publishers. It is almost miraculous that I have been able to do a few cross-over stories, especially the upcoming Spektor/Dagar/Tragg issue (which also has a villain or two from *Mystery Digest*). Elliott Kane, a black medium, and perhaps the first black adventure character at GK since *Brothers of the Spear*, is introduced in *Spektor* 4. He'll make frequent appearances.

Getting away from Spektor, I'm pushing for a very different type of caveman book starring Tragg. Unfortunately, there are only two editors at the Hollywood office of GK and it's almost impossible to increase their work load. Furthermore, there are few artists for adventure-type books GK is satisfied with out here (Jesse Santos and Dan Spiegle do everything) and [illegible] to take on a new title—means that an old title must first be dropped. Sales figures on *Dagar* 1 indicate that it sold better than any other GK title for that month including all the Disney books, etc. If such sales continue, perhaps *Dagar* will go bi-monthly instead of quarterly, and maybe Tragg will get a chance in a book of his own.

Don Glut

MEDIA SCENE

The Fall 1973 television season promises to be full of the violence, suspense and science fiction that the audiences of today demand. Cops are the "in" thing this year, with over a half-dozen new police shows being broadcast every week.

Police Story first appeared as a pilot movie on NBC in March starring Vic Morrow as the crusty veteran policeman on a special tactical force. The show, created by Joseph Wambaugh, who is also responsible for the film *New Centurions*, will be aired Tuesday nights at 10:00 as an anthology package of police tales.

Shaft, starring Richard Roundtree, will be making the TV scene as a series scheduled to appear on an alternating basis with made-for-TV movies and Jimmy Stewart's new crime-courtroom suspense series, *Hawkins*.

Chase, the Jack Webb production about four hip cops doing extra-legal duty, will appear Tuesdays at 8:00 as a new series. The semi-fictional adventures of *Cojack* will also be appearing this fall. The series will star Telly Savalas, and is based upon the character he portrayed in the TV movie, *The Marcus-Nelson Murders*. This show will be on the air Wednesday nights at ten on CBS, opposite NBC's new anthology series *Love Story*.

Philip D'Antoni, of *Bullitt* and *French Connection* fame, sold one of his three made for TV movies as a series. Toma starring Tony Musante, will be on Thursday nights at 8:00, just before *Kung Fu* on ABC.

Lorne Green, fresh off the *Bonanza* spread will be playing in a new crime show for ABC titled *Griff*. The series will air at 10 o'clock, following ABC's 90 minute suspense movie, which will feature Lee Majors as Cyborg, one week out of every month.

Harlan Ellison's hour-long, science-fiction series, the *Starlost*, will be shown by NBC on Saturdays at 7:00. The show is being produced by Canada's Glen-Warren and stars Keir Dullea (from *2001: Space Odyssey*) as a futuristic spaceman on a giant ship that is evacuating earth survivors to the nearest star. Special effects will be handled by Doug Trumbull, who was the man responsible for the spectacular visuals in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Silent Running*.

Orson Welles will host a half hour of *Great Mysteries*, using his voice and presence to lend power to this new series from 20th Century-Fox.

The new *Perry Mason* show will be appearing Sundays on ABC at 8:00, even though the star is not yet definite.

Bill Bixby will be *The Magician* in an hour-long series from NBC this fall, using his sleight of hand and prestidigitational powers to foil evil and bring justice to those in need, every Tuesday at 9:00.

Diana Rigg will be turning in her leather outfits and black belt this fall to appear on the NBC comedy series *Diana*, Monday nights at 8:30.

Another Saturday cartoon feature joining the ranks will be *Star Trek*. Production is being supervised by D. C. Fontana, writer from the original show, and the voices of Shatner, Nimoy, Barret and the rest are being used.

Universal television is filming a four-hour version of Mary Shelley's *Dr. Frankenstein* novel for NBC. It is supposed to be an extremely faithful interpretation of the original novel and will star James Mason, David McCallum, Agnes Moorehead, Michael Sarrazin and Nicola Pagett. NBC is considering presenting the epic in either two two-hour segments or four one-hour programs.

The days of the radio serials are returning. Five days a week *Zero Hour* will come over the air, full of cliff-hanger endings, suspense and action. Rod Serling will host this series of half-hour shows being produced by Jay M. Kholos in Los Angeles. The resurgence of interest in such shows as the *Green Hornet, The Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow* has brought about this "unique" new idea which will take off soon in a week-long episode starring Howard Duff, Patty Duke and John Astin. Kholos also has plans for three other shows, including comedy, soap opera and a dramatic anthology.

Merian C. Cooper, writer and director of *King Kong*, died on April 22, 1973 at the age of 79. Cooper's creation of Kong was the high point of his career, due to the highly innovative and trend-setting features of the film. Besides being an imaginative version of Beauty and the Beast, it was also the first film to feature a complete musical score, by Max Steiner, and the first really entertaining and believable use of special animation through models. Thanks to Cooper, the name of Kong has become synonomous with classic horror.

Actor Robert Armstrong, who starred in *King Kong*, coincidentally died April 21 at the age of 82.

Sergio Leone has cast Henry Fonda in *My Name is Nobody*. Fonda also starred in Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, which has run three years in some European theaters. Leone is best remembered for his direction of Clint Eastwood and Lee Van Cleef in the *Fistful of Dollars* westerns. Leone's impetus has profited Eastwood immensley and has resulted in Eastwood's starring and directing *High Plains Drifter*, a film written by Ernest (*Shaft*) Tidyman and of the same violent western mold as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

Russ Jones' first underground comic, *Tales from the Fridge*, will be published at the end of April by Denis Kitchen. Russ is also doing the screenplay for an Avco-Embassy picture about the real Dracula—*Vlad, the Impaler*.

Gil Kane was recently honored with the Reuben Goldberg Award for Outstanding Achievement in a Story Comic Book for his work on *Spiderman* at the 27th Annual Reuben Awards presentation. Other award winners included Stan Drake, for his work on the newspaper strip *The Heart of Juliet Jones*, and Dik Browne, who is currently working on *Hagar the Horrible*.

It seems as though the mafia-busters are the paperback industry's latest giant sellers. With the success of Pinnacle Books' Executioner, Destroyer, Butcher and Death Merchant series, Lancer Books has come out with The Enforcer, The Blaster and Soldato while Pyramid has its Expediter. In the future, we can look forward to such Cosa Nostra killers as the Handyman, The Lone Wolf and The Wrecker, all soon to be released while the market is ready and the money is green.

Foremost of the big mafia-busters is the Executioner, by Don Pendleton. The Executioner, published by the Pinnacle paperback company, is such a popular series that Pendleton would like to take it to another paperback company for a better piece of the action. Movie plans have been announced for the series, but it appears that the 10th book in the Mack Bolan saga will be the last under the Pinnacle banner. If Pendleton can break his contract, watch the Signet paperback company for The Executioner's next hit. A future issue of *Comixscene* will feature an in-depth view of the blood and thunder world of organized crime.

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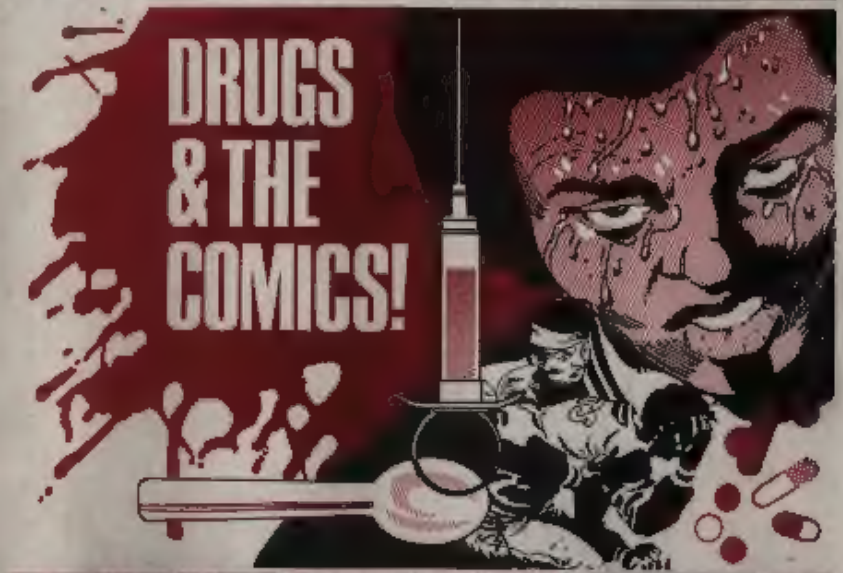
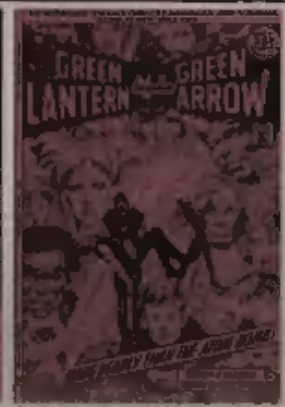
MAY–JUNE 1973 NO.4

COMIXSCENE

COMICS FILMS PAPERBACKS UNDERGROUNDS TV PULPS





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